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JAZER AND ITS SITE

AMONG the biblical names of localities which situated in the territory west of the Jordan fell as inheritance to the tribes Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh there frequently occurs the name of a place Jazer. In revising for publication the geographical part of **כפתור ופרח**, the writer became convinced that misconstructions can only be avoided by assuming that there were two places called Jazer. This is very easy to prove, but more difficult to determine their exact sites. First of all, however, I must show the reason for coming to this conclusion. To begin with, the passage in Jerem. 48, 32: "In weeping for Jazer, will I weep for thee (Moab)"¹ proves that one of the two places called Jazer at least was situated in Moab. Its geographical site is given by Eusebius: *Iaζηρ* ten Roman miles from Philadelphia, fifteen from *Εσβους* (*Onomastica Sacra*, ed. De Lagarde (1887), 264, 98). Accordingly Schwarz, *Das Heilige Land*, (1852), p. 183: Jazer, according to Eusebius, six hours north of Heshbon. There can be no doubt that it corresponds to the present ruins of Seir.² Comp. Hildesheimer, *Beiträge zur Geographie Palästinas*, 1886, p. 62, note 462. Buhl (*Geographie des alten Palästina*, Freiburg-Leipzig, 1896, 264) objects, it is true, to this identification on the ground of phonetics. But the name Jazer is also mentioned Num. 32, 3 alongside of Nimrah

¹ The region from Arnon, Wadi-el-Majib, to the Jabbok, Nahr-ez-Zerka, the southern boundary of Ammon, was taken by Israel from the Amorites (Num. 21, 24). But before it had been in the possession of Moab and at a still earlier date it belonged to Ammon (*ibid.*, 26, and elsewhere). In the talmudic literature frequent mention is made of **עִמּוֹן וְמוֹאב**; by Ammon is meant the territory of which the Amorites (Sihon) had dispossessed the Moabites. See further below.

² These ruins are called to-day Ĥirbet Sār or -Šār.

(the present Tell Nimrin) and Heshbon. Onkelos according to one recension³ renders the verse thus: ⁴ 'מכללתא ומלבשתא וכומרין' 'דבית נמרין ובית חושבנא ובעל דיבון וסימא' וקבורתא דמשה ובעון יעזר. The genitive following 'וכומרין' 'the priests,' by which 'יעזר' is paraphrased, shows that we have to look for this place in the neighborhood of Nimrin. At all events it must have been situated in this region, i. e. in the Belka which stretches from the Arnon to the Jabbok. On the other hand, we read Num. 21, 32 (the section⁵ preceding narrates the conquest of the country from the Arnon to the Jabbok by Israel): "And Moses sent to spy out Jazer, and took the towns thereof, and drove out the Amorites that were there." But how was it possible for him to send spies into a country that had already been conquered by Israel? Apparently reference is made to a place Jazer that was situated

³ מקראות גדולות, Venice 1517. Rabbenu Bahai in his Bible Commentary (1523) who likewise quotes Onkelos has the following text: 'ומלבשתא שופן בית נמרין ובית חושבנא ובעל דיבון וסימא' וקבורתא דמשה ומכללתא מרבשתא ומכוור ובית נמרין. The fragmentary Targum has: נמרין. I have found in a relatively old Yemen MS. of the Pentateuch with Onkelos and Saadya Gaon's Arabic translation the following marginal gloss: 'ירושלמי: שכללתא ומלבשתא שופן ובית נמרין ובית חושבנא ובעל דיבון וסימא' וקבורתא דמשה ובעון. It thus closely corresponds to the Onkelos text as quoted by Bahai. Compare in this connection Ps.-Jonathan. See also Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, II (1876), 273, note 1. As to the relation of the various Targumim among themselves, comp. Grünhut, *נוצר תאנה*, Jerusalem 1906, 82 ff. From the fact, however, that the MSS. do not give this text (comp. Berliner, *Targum Onkelos*) we may gather that the entire passage is an interpolation from the Jerushalmi; comp. Adler, *נתינת לגר*, *ad locum*.

⁴ I do not know how to account for the reading 'שופן' (see the preceding note). As to 'מכוור' (Ps.-Jonathan), comp. Hildesheimer, *l. c.*, 461. Possibly it is corrupted from 'כומר'.

⁵ See the preceding note. By this change of name Num. 32, 38 becomes intelligible.

⁶ Comp. Adler, *l. c.* Attention may also be called to another point: 'יערער' (Num. 32, 34) which was situated on the upper edge of the Arnon, the present Arā'er, is rendered in the Fragmentary Targum 'לחית'; this is evidently due to confusion with 'ער' which is so rendered in Onkelos.

north of the Jabbok, which place was not yet in their hands. It is thus proved conclusively that there were two places called Jazer. But where was this second Jazer situated? Pharḥi, *l. c.* (s. note 7), remarks: יעזר קורין לו זרעה. The text is here evidently in a fragmentary condition. But by reading the text carefully, one can easily find out that in the missing part Pharḥi spoke of a number of localities which bore the same name.

Accordingly, Schwarz has confounded matters when he says (*l. c.*, p. 183): "Jazer, according to Eusebius, lies 6 hours north of Heshbon. It still existed in the days of Estori." It is impossible that Estori referred to the Moabite Jazer. Hildesheimer (*l. c.*) writes: We learn from Pharḥi (p. 49b) that Zor'a (Ezr'a) was identified with the biblical Jazer. But to this the following objection is in order: Ezr'a being situated in the north of Bashan, the Scriptural order of narration (Num. 21, 32-33) according to which Jazer was first conquered and then a turn was made in the direction of Bashan, becomes clearly impossible. As for Estori's זרעה, we are by no means at a loss for an explanation. The map (Baed.⁶, p. 194) registers a Tell Zora'a—exactly as written by Estori—not far from the southern edge of Lake Gennesaret. Hence this Jazer was situated in Gilead. And since Ammon whose southern boundary was the Jabbok (Deut. 2, 27) was to be spared we can readily understand how in making a circuit about the territory of Ammon they turned first towards Jazer (Zora'a) and then towards Bashan. The Amorites whom we meet with as well in the territory west of the Jordan were thus a widely ramified people.

The land Jazer which on the north reached as far as Lake Gennesaret formed a narrow strip adjoining the Jordan in the west and on the east the desert. On its south side it reached as far as Maḥanaim, the modern Maḥneh. From here to the Jabbok was the dominion of Ammon. But the Ammonites

⁷ So also Pharḥi (כפתור ופרח, Berlin 1852, 49): Beth Nimrah, the present Nimr, is about one hour distance, south of Jazer. See further below. The former was a Gadite town; but in any case it was situated in the Jordan valley "and in the valley Beth Haram (the present Tell-er-Rāme) and Beth Nimrah" (Josh. 13, 27). See the map in Baedeker⁶, p. 10.

claimed as well the country lying between the Arnon and the Jabbok. This may be explained in the following way. Originally matters really stood thus. But defeated in a war with Moab, the Ammonites were forced to relinquish to the victor a part of their territory as far as the Jabbok, with the exception of Rabbath-Ammon, called in later times Philadelphia, the modern Ammān, and its environs. The victor, however, did not long enjoy his conquered possessions, for when Israel arrived on the scene, the country was in the hands of the Amorites. It is therefore no contradiction if this strip is now ascribed to Ammon and now to Moab. It belonged at different times to both. When at the allotment of the land, Reuben's possessions extended from the Arnon to Heshbon (Josh. 13, 13 ff.), there remained for Gad whose possessions reached to the lower end of Lake Gennesaret (*ibid.*, 27) the Jordan valley as far as Jabbok; then the land from Maḥneh to the north of Tell Zora'a. Ammon and its environs remained as before in the possession of the Ammonites. But as the Jordan valley may with propriety be called half the land of Moab, it might as properly be designated as half the land of Ammon (*ibid.*, 25). Beginning in the north and going down south Gad possessed: Jazer (Zora'a), Gilead, half the land of Ammon (the Jordan valley), and a part of Heshbon, namely its western lowlands, reaching as far as Beth Nimrah. In this order the possessions of Gad are enumerated (*ibid.*, 25-27). But if we do not admit that there was a second Jazer, the order has no sense.

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